

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 14429

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, NI
SUBJECT: FMG ACTS TO DEFUSE RADIO KADUNA CONTROVERSY

REF: KADUNA 1207 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: FMG HAS MOVED TO HEAD OFF GROWING POLITICAL
CONTROVERSY OVER MAINTAINING RADIO KADUNA'S SHORT-WAVE
SERVICES. FMG ACTION INCLUDE REMOVAL OF OFFICIALS WHO
HAVE TAKEN PUBLIC STAND ON ISSUE AS WELL AS NATIONAL
TAKEOVER OF STATE SHORT-WAVE SERVICES. END SUMMARY.

1. IN COORDINATED SERIES OF STEPS, FMG HAS ACTED TO
DEFUSE POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE RADIO KADUNA CONTROVERSY
BY REMOVING FROM OFFICE THE KEY ACTORS, ANNOUNCING THAT
STATE SHORT-WAVE SERVICES WIC BE TAKEN OVER BY NATIONAL
GOVERNMENT, AND SETTING UP A NATIONAL PANEL TO IMPLEMENT
GOVERNMENT POLICY ON RADIO BROADCASTING.

2. FMG ACTION FOLLOWED DECEMBER 8 JOINT MEETING OF
SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL AND NATIONAL COUNCIL OF STATES,
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AND INCLUDED FOLLOWING MEASURES:
-- REMOVAL OF FEDERAL COMMISSIONER FOR INFORMATION,
AYO OGUNLADE, WHO HAD BEEN PUSHING FOR TERMINATION OF RADIO
KADUNA'S SHORT-WAVE TRANSMISSION SERVICE. OGUNLADE WILL
RETURN TO A POSITION AS PERMANENT SECRETARY WITH ONDO STATE
PUBLIC SERVICE. DR. G. B. LETON, FEDERAL COMMISSIONER FOR
ESTABLISHMENT, WILL TAKE OVER FROM OGUNLADE.

-- REASSIGNMENT OF THE NORTHERN MILITARY GOVERNOR WHO LED THE ATTACK ON THE POLICY TO TERMINATE SHORT-WAVE SERVICE FROM RADIO KADUNA. GROUP CAPTAIN USMAN JIBRIN FROM KADUNA STATE HAS BEEN REPLACED BY GROUP CAPTAIN MUKHTAR MOHAMMED, THE FEDERAL COMMISSIONER FOR HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT. SPOKE TO STATE GOVERNOR UMARU

ALHAJI MOHAMMED AND KANO STATE GOVERNOR SANI BELLO WHO HAD ALSO VOICED SUPPORT FOR RADIO KADUNA REMAIN IN OFFICE.

FYI: MILITARY GOVERNOR OF NIGER STATE, COMMANDER MURTALA NYOKA WAS REPLACED IN THE SHAKE-UP BY COMMANDER O. E. OKIWE, HOWEVER, CHIEF OF STATE DANJUMA TOLD RELIABLE SOURCE THAT NYOKA'S TRANSFER WAS NOT RELATED TO THE RADIO KADUNA PROBLEM. END FYI.

-- ANNOUNCEMENT THAT AS OF APRIL 1, FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE OVER ALL STATE RADIO STATIONS BROADCASTING WITH SHORT-WAVE AND POWERFUL MEDIUM WAVE SERVICES. COUPLED WITH THAT ACTION WAS ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL PANEL TO IMPLEMENT RADIO POLICY. PANEL WILL BE MADE UP OF CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF ALL AFFECTED RADIO STATIONS PLUS REPRESENTATIVES FROM NIGERIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION, CABINET OFFICE AND FEDERAL MINISTRIES OF INFORMATION, ESTABLISHMENTS AND JUSTICE. PERMANENT SECRETARY OF FEDERAL INFORMATION MINISTRY WILL LEAD PANEL.

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3. COMMENT: RADIO KADUNA CONTROVERSY HAS BEEN SMOLDERING NOW FOR MORE THAN A MONTH. ALTHOUGH FACTS MAY APPEAR TO BE SOMEWHAT ESOTERIC TO NONCOGNOSCENTI OF NIGERIAN POLITICS, THE PROBLEM WAS POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE (AND STILL MAY BE) BECAUSE IT TOUCHES SENSITIVE NERVES OF REGIONALISM AND NORTHERN IDENTITY. RADIO KADUNA HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN THE VOICE OF THE NORTH AND GENERALLY LISTENED TO AS AN ENUNCIATOR OF NORTHERN VIEWS. OGUNLADE DEFENDED THE POLICY OF TERMINATING RADIO KADUNA'S SHORT-WAVE SERVICE BY CLAIMING THAT IT WAS LISTENED TO OUTSIDE NIGERIA. NIGERIA SHOULD SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE, NOT WITH SEVERAL. HOWEVER, THIS RATIONALE DID NOT CONVINCE NORTHERNERS. OGUNLADE ALSO CLAIMED THAT TERMINATION OF STATE SHORT2 WAVE SERVICE HAD BEEN NATIONAL POLICY SINCE 1973, A POINT DISPUTED BY JIBRIA AND OTHERS.

4. DURING RECENT TRIP THROUGH FOUR NORTHERN STATES WHICH INCLUDED MEETINGS WITH OFFICIALS FROM THE MILITARY GOVERNORS' OFFICE (MGO), EMBOFF REPEATEDLY ENCOUNTERED VIEW THAT POLICY OF TERMINATING RADIO KADUNA'S SHORT-WAVE SERVICE WAS BOTH TECHNICALLY WRONG AND A POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ATTACK ON THE NORTH. PRINCIPLE ASSISTANT SECRETARY TO MGO IN

PLATEAU STATE TERMED POLICY 'AN ATTACK ON TEN NORTHERN STATES' WHICH MADE NO PRACTICAL SENSE BECAUSE RADIO KADUNA PROVIDED NEWS, MUSIC, AND PROGRAMS THAT NORTH WANTED TO HEAR. OFFICIAL IN MGO IN BORNO STATE VIEWED POLICY AS EFFORT TO REMOVE ONE OF FEW REMAINING SYMBOLS OF NORTHERN UNITY.

5. SWEEPING FMG ACTION STEERS MIDDLE COURSE IN THAT IT REMOVES OFFICIALS ON BOTH SIDES OF ISSUE. IT ALSO STEERS MIDDLE COURSE IN THAT RADIOS OYO, ENUGU, AND OWERRI WILL BE TAKEN OVER BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RATHER THAN JUST RADIO KADUNA. HOWEVER, THEIR SHORT-WAVE CAPACITY AS WELL AS THEIR 'DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS' WILL BE MAINTAINED.

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6. IT MAY BE TOO EARLY TO SAY WHETHER THE FMG'S PACKAGE SOLUTION FOR THE PROBLEM WILL WORK. NORTHERN ELEMENTS WILL BE PLEASED WITH THE PART OF THE SOLUTION WHICH MAINTAINS SHORT-WAVE SERVICE. HOWEVER, NORTHERN-ORIENTED NEW NIGERIAN ON DECEMBER 12 CRITICIZED IDEA OF FEDERAL CONTROL OF THE RADIOS. IF THE ISSUE DOES NOT FADE AWAY, IT COULD COMBINE WITH SHARIA COURT PROBLEM IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY TO REOPEN ISSUE OF REGIONALISM AND NORTHERN IDENTITY IN NIGERIA, A SPECTRE WHICH FMG WOULD WISH TO AVOID AT ALL COSTS. END COMMENT.
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